

COMMENTS ON THE UNFPA DRAFT COUNTRY PROGRAMME DOCUMENT FOR LAOS

Second regular session 2021

Comments by Ireland	UNFPA country/regional office response
It is positive to see GBV, Comprehensive Sexuality Education and LGBTI support being mainstreamed, and we look forward to seeing this reflected in practice.	Noted with appreciation.
We would like to see deeper consideration of vulnerable groups such as people living with HIV and AIDS across the programme.	<p>Noted. The UNFPA country office led the effort to define the ‘vulnerable groups’ analysis and identification for the Socio-Economic Response Plan for COVID-19, which was also incorporated into the UNSDCF and thus into the new UNFPA country programme for the Lao PDR.</p> <p>In 2020, one of the joint programmes UNFPA led included, as main partner UNAIDS, a joint programme aimed at reaching underserved populations, including those living with HIV. In the new country programme, the prevention and protection focus will include the prevention of HIV/AIDS, in line with the UNFPA mandate.</p>
UN coordination can be improved as highlighted in the evaluation, particularly given obvious synergies with WHO; UN Women; WFP etc. We note that UNFPA in Lao PDR had only one joint programme prior to 2020, although this has since improved to four. This needs to be an area of continuous focus.	Noted. Joint programming will be taken forward in the new programme, in line with the UNSDCF. UNFPA is one of the agencies most involved in joint programmes and sees this approach as essential to improving development results.
We believe there is scope to make some of the targets more ambitious. In Lao PDR the previous plan had a target of increasing Government funding for family planning by 15% from \$40,000 (output 1). The outcome far exceeded that (seven-fold increase) but clearly from a very low baseline. Output 2 aimed for a 15% increase in midwives trained. Commendably they achieved 75% but this indicates that the target was unrealistically low. This should be factored into the target-setting in the new CPD.	We take note of the recommendation. It should be noted that while the significant economic growth experienced by Laos in the preceding five years contributed to successes in increasing government budgetary allocations for family planning, this may not be possible to the same degree over the next five years. Similarly, the increased political commitment for the ICPD agenda allowed for a greater fiscal space for strengthening midwifery training.

	<p>Moving forward, it should be noted that the donor landscape will continue to change in Laos, and funding for SRH is also likely to be impacted by COVID.</p> <p>The targets for the new country programme have been carefully assessed against the current and projected environment for Laos, to apply approaches that can be scaled up for sustainability and to address those left behind.</p>
Comments by the United States of America	UNFPA country/regional office response
We commend UNFPA’s inclusion of several activities in Outcome 3 to reduce the risk of GBV in advance of disaster situations occurring.	Noted with appreciation. UNFPA welcomes USAID in Laos to partner with UNFPA on efforts in this area.
Regarding Outcome 4, we applaud the references to improvements of the civil registry. This is critical and should be prioritized, as the data that forms the basis of the other activities is initially derived from the civil registry.	Well noted. UNFPA is already working on strengthening civil registration and vital statistics as an essential component of ensuring the availability of disaggregated data for planning and monitoring.